

GHETTO QUESTIONS

CAMDEN / LONDON

Badrul Miah

Victim of racism?

FRANCE

Are North African
youths driven to
fundamentalism?

No 29 • December 1995–January 1996 • 80p

CAMPAIGN AGAINST
carf
RACISM & FASCISM

UNITED STATES

FORWARDS or
BACKWARDS
WITH THE
MILLION MAN
MARCH?

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EDITORIAL

We must not leave to the environmental movement alone the protests against the judicial murder of Ken Saro-Wiwa and his eight Ogoni comrades. For Saro-Wiwa was more than an environmental activist. His struggle was against racism and genocide in the Niger Delta, and his death is an event that should force anti-racists here in Britain to recognise the need for the struggle against racism to be fought on both international and domestic fronts.

Internationally, Shell, with the other oil companies, stands accused of environmental devastation, of turning the bread basket of the Niger Delta into totally infertile land, and of complicity with the military's brutal and violent suppression of the Ogoni people. Shell's argument that 'Nigeria is different from Europe', that you cannot expect multinationals to secure the same environmental safeguards as in Europe, is specious and racist in its use of double standards to mask what Saro-Wiwa described as 'robbery in broad daylight at the end of the twentieth century'.

Shell is the focus now. But the demand for an international oil boycott against Nigeria should also inform and strengthen the fight against Howard's immigration bill, the main plank of which, guided by the racist logic of 'weeding out bogus refugees', is the so-called 'white list' of 'safe' countries.

For although, in the light of the international outcry over Saro-Wiwa's death, the government will not now include Nigeria on the list, in practice, Nigeria has been on an unofficial 'safe' list for the two years that Abacha has been in power. How else to explain the fact that, as CARF reports in this issue, only four Nigerians have been recognised as refugees in the last couple of years?

The same double standards employed by Shell inform a refugee policy which declared openly, in the run-up to the first Asylum Bill in 1992, that people from outside Europe should not expect the same 'levels of security, economic opportunity or individual liberty' enjoyed by Europeans. And what these political double standards mask is the same economic interests.

Multinational economic interests devastate Ogoniland and sustain the Nigerian military regime which represses protests and kills the protesters. The same economic interests dictate that those fleeing the repression are deemed bogus. Countries deemed safe tend to be those that Britain and western Europe like to do business with – 'safe' for profits, that is, not for people. Only a sustained campaign exposing the connections between multinational corporations and the British government can give the lie to the spurious reasoning on which Howard bases his obscene proposals. ■

ASYLUM-SEEKERS: HOME OFFICE INJUSTICE

A 19-YEAR-OLD HOMELESS ETHIOPIAN, Bayeh Arefayne, set himself alight at a petrol station in Hanwell, west London, on 22 October, and died in hospital with 70 per cent burns a few days later, after he heard that his asylum claim had been rejected and he was to be deported to Ethiopia. The young man walked into the petrol station with a noose around his neck, doused himself in petrol from a pump and set himself alight. The Home Office has refused to discuss his case.

AN ALGERIAN TAX INSPECTOR ON THE POINT OF DEATH after 44 days on hunger strike was flown back to Algeria by air ambulance in October to die invisibly. The director of the Medical Foundation for the Care of Victims of Torture accused the Home Office of 'dumping' 29-year-old Djemal Flissa in Algeria 'just so they won't have the embarrassment of him dying here', since his death would undermine the arguments that most asylum-seekers are economic migrants. Although Mr Flissa's weight was down to 7 stone and he was extremely weak and unable to sit up in bed, the Home Office declared him fit to travel.

KILL THIS RACIST BILL

6 December

Hunger strike and picket outside Social Security Advisory Committee, 9.30–12 noon, Carey Street, London WC2

19 December

Lobby of Parliament

13 January

Rally
2pm, Bloomsbury Central Baptist Church, Shaftesbury Avenue

24 February

National demonstration
central London

National Network Against Detentions and Deportations

c/o CARF, BM Box 8784,
London WC1N 3XX. Tel 0171 837 1450

National Coalition of Anti-Deportation Campaigns

22 Berners Street, Lozells,
Birmingham B19 2DR

Campaign against the Immigration and Asylum Bill

c/o CAPA, St Hilda's East Community Centre,
Club Row, London E2



Rod Leon

New regulations will cut social security benefits to asylum-seekers, while the Asylum and Immigration Bill announced in the Queen's Speech proposes a 'white list' of countries to which it is 'safe' to return refugees.

THE FIGHTBACK

Within a few days of Peter Lilley's October announcement that benefits would be withdrawn from asylum-seekers who pursue an appeal, 150 people attended a picket outside Downing Street organised by the National Network Against Detentions and Deportations. When the Social Security Advisory Committee meets in London on 6 December to consider the proposals and make recommendations to the government, members will be greeted by asylum-seekers mounting a hunger strike in protest at what can only be seen as an attempt to starve them out of the country. 'My choice is to beg or to starve', one asylum-seeker who plans to take part in the protest told CARF.

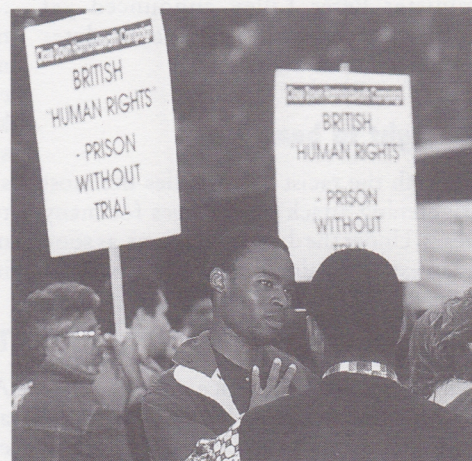
'The withdrawal of benefits combined with the proposals to prosecute employers who employ "illegal immigrants" will make it impossible for anyone to subsist while their appeal is pending,' said a spokesperson for the National Network, which is coordinating the protests. 'In effect this is a withdrawal of the right to appeal.' These measures do not need a Bill, and are likely to come into force on 8 January unless the Labour Party forces the government into a full debate in the Commons, and gets them revoked.

No to passport checks

Protests against the Bill itself are also under way, with a rally planned for January by the National Coalition of Anti-Deportation Campaigns and a national demonstration of the Campaign Against the Immigration and Asylum Bill in February. But the real test will be the trade union movement's opposition to the implementation of immigration checks on black people in the workplace and service provision. 'The only way to defeat this legislation is a campaign of non-implementation', says Liz Short of Hackney

Unison, which has recently been defending staff members with African names whose details were illegally passed to the Immigration and Nationality Department. Several Unison branches have recently passed motions pledging to defend members who refuse to implement the legislation, and Unison Broad Left will attempt to have this adopted as national union policy.

How successful Unison will be is debatable. Apart from uniting with employer organisations to condemn the proposals, the TUC has done nothing to inform its membership of what kind of action (beyond paper condemnation) is needed. It seems to be hiding behind the argument that Tory legislation has left individual trade unionists too isolated and vulnerable to oppose immigration checks. In this situation, the TUC's declared priority is to protect its members from victimisation. And if, as the TUC appears to believe, the only way to defeat the checks is through street protest, then why did the TUC national demonstration on 28 October mobilise only 5,000 people, most from anti-racist groups rather than from the TUC's membership of over 7 million?



Darren Jakobsen

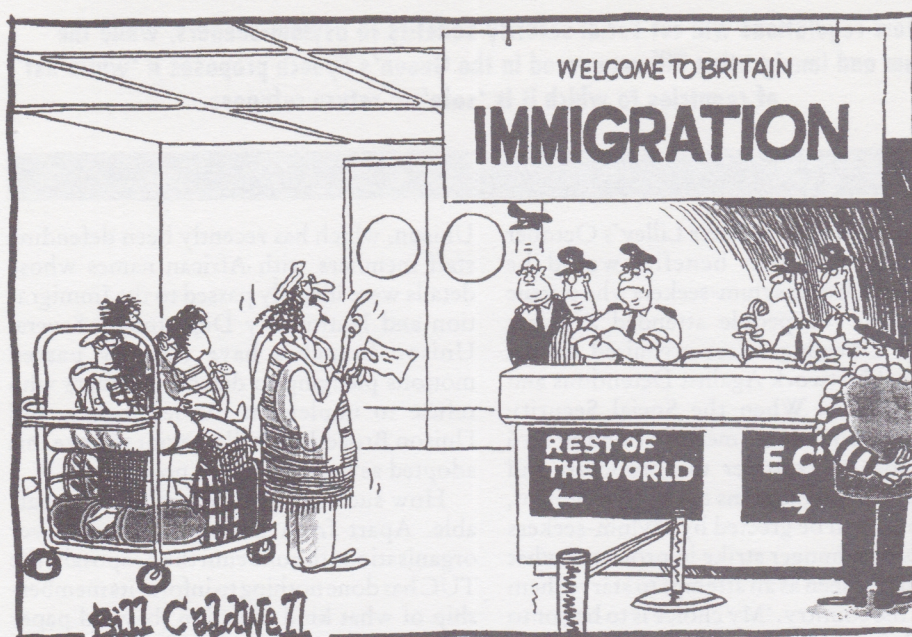
WHAT'S BEHIND THE LAWS?

The word 'refugee' used to conjure up images of flight, hardship and suffering deserving of relief. Two events in October served to show how refugees are now seen as 'scroungers' and 'bogus', undeserving of public or private assistance.

Charity begins at home

When the National Lottery Board announced modest grants to two refugee

charities, an Eritrean community and advice centre and a Vietnamese mental health charity, the Pavlov-dog reactions were not slow in coming. Tory ex-minister David Mellor accused the board of 'political correctness', and the *Sun* stirred mischief with its 'mad Somalis £183,000; The Samaritans £30,000', a theme repeated by the *Star*. Columnist Chris Roycroft-Davis of the *Sun* told us that none of his money would in future go to 'support groups for



'Excuse pleez ... which way to lottery awards?'
- the *Star's* response on 24 October to the Lottery Board's grants

overwrought and homeless Cambodian lesbians who can't speak our language'.

To find out where the gutter press get their language and their ideas about refugees from, one need look no further than the government, which has, over the past five years, always put the word 'bogus' in front of 'refugee'. Thus, at the Tory party conference, social security minister Peter Lilley announced yet another draconian package to deter 'bogus' asylum-seekers.

No right to benefits

Beneath the racist rhetoric lies the most frightening attack on refugees for many years. Under the draft regulations, as soon as an asylum claim is rejected, all benefits stop. (50,000 asylum-seekers are likely to be affected by the withdrawal of £200m in social security benefits.) The right of appeal can be enjoyed in practice only by those with private funds or by those who are allowed to work (not allowed for the first six months after the claim is made) and can find work, or can be supported by relatives or community groups. The others will have to demand to be locked up, or beg on the streets, or go home. As the *Independent* commented, the DSS should issue asylum-seekers with a pamphlet on begging techniques and street regulations.

Closing down appeals

In introducing the regulations, Lilley said that refugees were entitled to appeal, but not at the taxpayers' expense. The implication was that those who appeal are

merely stringing out their stay, so as to claim more benefits. Nothing could be further from the truth. Refugees are forced to appeal because of the appalling quality of Home Office decisions. How can a Zairean who has witnessed his brother being shot by the army not appeal against a decision which reasons that 'the soldiers were firing wildly within the house and ... the shooting of your brother was not necessarily deliberate'. Or a Colombian not appeal against this reasoning: 'Your enemies have had ample opportunity to kill you, but they have not done so'? Or someone who has suffered torture, not seek to challenge a decision to force him to return home on the basis that 'there is no evidence that the authorities are still interested in you'?

The 'white list'

Another weapon in the government's war against refugees is to declare a number of countries 'safe'. We have only their word for this 'safety': refugees and their representatives have for years demanded sight of the reports on which the Home Office assessments

are based, in vain. But an asylum-seeker who comes from such a country will have to dislodge a legal presumption of safety.

The 'safe country' procedure is designed, we are told, to 'weed out the bogus refugees' (that phrase again) to enable the genuine ones to get their claims processed speedily. But the obvious way to do this would be to have an 'unsafe country' list, with a presumption in favour of refugee status for people from those countries. Bosnia, Rwanda, Somalia, Sri Lanka, Algeria and Nigeria spring to mind.

Starving refugees out

If the regulations are not challenged, asylum-seekers will lose their only remedy against biased and irrational Home office decisions. There will be no pressure to determine appeals promptly - in fact the opposite is true, and the Home Office will be tempted to drag out the appeal process to starve refugees out.

Some asylum-seekers will not even have to wait to be refused before being cut off from all benefits. After 8 January, anyone in Britain as a visitor or student who claims asylum is to be denied all benefit, unless the minister responsible for immigration declares that recent events in the claimant's home country justify the claim - which is about as likely as Lilley's conversion to social solidarity.

The economic savings from the benefit cuts have not been properly calculated. But cost was not the primary purpose of these measures: the overwhelming policy consideration is the looming general election and the desire to play the 'race card'. As for Labour, Jack Straw has resolved to scrap the 'racist' laws proposed by Howard (the safe country lists and the reduced appeal rights), but Labour has been quiet on the denial of benefits. If Lilley's proposals go through, Jack Straw might find more and more refugees among the 'aggressive beggars and squeegee merchants' he wants to sweep off the streets. ■

CARF QUIZ

What do Nigeria, Algeria and Sri Lanka have in common?

- a) They are all either military regimes or in the midst of a civil war
- b) They are all countries where minority populations are tortured and persecuted by government forces
- c) They all buy arms from the west to use against their own people
- d) The British government considers them all 'safe' when assessing political asylum applications
- e) All of the above

First prize: a week in Campsfield. Answers on a postcard please...

Defend Nigerian asylum-seekers

It seems to be easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a Nigerian asylum-seeker to gain refuge in the UK.

Until now, British anti-deportation campaigns involving Nigerians have tended to concentrate on family ties or long residence. Abdul Onibiyo, bundled on to a plane in October after 30 years in Britain because of a break in his residence, and Akin Adegboye, now languishing in Saughton prison, Edinburgh, are typical. There has been no high-profile campaign for Nigerians' asylum rights.

Now a new group, 'Justice Nigeria', has been formed to 'broaden popular support for rights of Nigerians in the UK and throughout the world'. Immigration and asylum rights will be a priority.

Home Office assessment: 'beyond belief'

Since the annulment of the 1993 presidential elections, the reinstatement of military rule, the ban on all opposition parties, the dissolution of trades unions and the imposition of martial law, over 9,000 Nigerians have claimed asylum in the UK. In this period, of a total of 2,000 decisions, only four Nigerians were granted refugee status, with a further 15 granted exceptional leave to remain. The others were refused. These facts are contained in *Beyond Belief*, the Refugee Council's devastating critique of the Home Office assessment of Nigeria as 'safe'. That Britain's attitude towards Nigerian asylum-seekers is determined by commercial considerations is confirmed by November's World Development Movement report, which shows that Britain continues to licence the export of arms and police equipment there despite a ban.

Oil embargo - the only way

There are other trade considerations too. Over half of all Nigerian oil exports go to Europe, with the Anglo-Dutch multinational Shell, the largest oil producer in Nigeria, extracting 910,000 barrels a day. It was Shell that in 1993 first encouraged police and military to unleash terror in Ogoniland by calling them in to protect the company from peaceful Ogoni protesters. And Shell, with its smaller US and European competitors, has left such environmental pollution as to turn the 'bread basket' of the Niger delta into 'totally infertile' land. In the words of Ken Saro-Wiwa, 'This is robbery in broad daylight at the end of the 20th century.'



David Drew

No wonder the lyrics of a popular Ogoni song go: 'The flames of Shell are the flames of hell'. But Shell still plans to invest £2.5 billion in a natural gas plant in Nigeria.

Rally round Dr Edeh

Protest actions against Nigeria are spreading. In Germany, a crucial anti-deportation campaign with Europe-wide support has formed around the case of Dr Anthony Edeh, a leading member of the Nigerian Oilworkers Union (NUPENG) and of the oppositional constitutional assembly.

The Antirassismus-Büro in Bremen writes:

'In autumn 1994, Dr Edeh came to Germany to claim asylum. After the 1993 imposition of military rule, Dr Edeh was prominent in organising a large wave of strikes and took part in the students' revolt as well as the Ogoni uprisings. Forced to flee, Dr Edeh came to Germany expecting to be granted political asylum. Instead, he was placed in the appalling conditions of a Bremen refugee container ship: 400 inmates, 4-bed cubby holes, nearly no subsistence money, no right to visits.

'Dr Edeh was forced to continue his fight for justice and human rights. He became a prominent member of the refugee committee, organising hunger strikes, press conferences and marches. At the same time, he faced the first rejection of his asylum application, and

Opposition to Shell is currently spearheaded by Friends of the Earth, which, together with Greenpeace, organised a day of protest on 18 November involving pickets of 100 petrol stations in the UK. It is calling for an immediate oil embargo. 'Nigeria was suspended from the Commonwealth, but so far Shell has been let off the hook. Now it's Shell's turn to share the blame for Saro-Wiwa's death,' a spokesperson commented. ■

Justice Nigeria PO Box 172, Feltham, Middlesex TW13 6XF Tel: 0181 384 2935

Abdul Onibiyo Campaign c/o Lambeth Unison
Adegboye Family Support Campaign

c/o Wester Hailes Against Racism Project,
16/1 Murrayburn Place, Edinburgh EH14 2RR

Anthony Edeh Defence Campaign

c/o Antirassismus-Büro,
Sielwall 38,
28290 Bremen, Germany

Beyond Belief: the Home Office and Nigeria available from

The Refugee Council,
3 Bondway, London SW8 1SJ

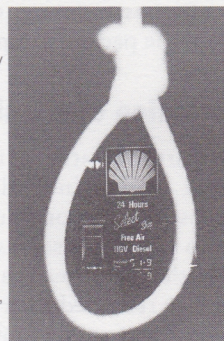
Ogoni Community Association

Tel: 01903 844244

Friends of the Earth

26-28 Underwood Street,
London N1 7QJ

Tel: 0171 566 1655.



Alec Smart

then, after the second rejection, the final refusal of his deportation appeal ... By simply arguing that Dr Edeh was not telling the truth (the courts act as if all Africans are liars), they put him on the deportation list, which now stands at 89,000 a year. A huge campaign followed. For the first time, the trade unions, principally IG-Metall and IG-Chimie, became involved in an anti-deportation campaign.

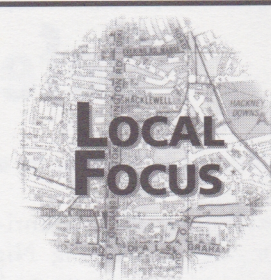
'But the most impressive solidarity action came when Dr Edeh's appeal was rejected. Members of the Berlin-based Research Centre on Migration and Refuge, of which Dr Edeh is a board member, rallied to their colleague's cause. From Italy, Hungary and Britain, from Bologna and Chemnitz universities and from CARF in London, came faxes to the judge responsible for the deportation order and to the immigration police, demanding a reversal of the decision. And something unprecedented happened: the Bundesamt withdrew its decision and reopened the case. The battle is not yet won, but a first victory has been secured and, most importantly, the deportation of Dr Edeh was stopped.' ■

'The Nigerian people demand an international boycott of Nigeria's oil because at the moment money from oil has little or no relevance to the well-being of the masses, but only a great revenue to fuel the military machine which is being used to subjugate the people.' — DR ANTHONY EDEH



GHETTO QUESTIONS

The challenge of Camden



150 people, young and old, from the Asian community in Somers Town, north London, attended a public meeting in November to launch a campaign to free the Kings Cross Two.

The convictions of Badrul Miah and Showkat Akhbar for murder and violent disorder following the killing of white schoolboy Richard Everitt have angered Camden's Asian community. Although nobody knows who actually killed Richard, Badrul Miah was given a life sentence for involvement in a 'joint enterprise' with the murderers. 'Nobody condones Richard's murder, it should never have happened. But there has been a serious miscarriage of justice,' a speaker told the packed campaign meeting.

Creation of a white martyr

A startling feature of the case was the way that police immediately placed the question of a possible 'racial motivation' into public consciousness via the media. By the day after the murder, when the police retracted their statement and said that it was a case of mistaken identity (the Asians were looking for a white boy who had stolen some jewellery and a mobile phone), it was too late. Richard had already become a white martyr for those who believed that Camden's Bengali community were taking over, and the BNP had already claimed him as a 'victim of a multiracial experiment'. There was widespread condemnation of 'racial violence' from sections of society previously indif-

ferent to the racist terrorism inflicted on Britain's black community. 'Killed for being white', screamed the headlines on the front pages of the *Sun* and the *British Nationalist*. Asian Tory MP Nirj Deva, and celebrities such as Barbara Windsor, came to lay wreaths at the spot where Richard was killed. Even Princess Di came to shed a tear.

The trial

Two aspects of the trial particularly enraged the local community. First, the Crown Prosecution Service, ignoring the police retraction, insisted on portraying the killing as a racial murder, arguing that the Bengalis 'would stab any white youth in the back'. Second, the prosecution's use of joint enterprise meant that the whole of the Bengali community was put on trial as 'racist'. Badrul was only the scapegoat. The judge's comment about

Badrul 'carrying the can' for the murder was an admission that they do not know who committed the murder but have to convict someone, anyone, and in this case, any Bengali would do.

The truth about Somers Town

Somers Town, an area covering 232 acres, lies just north of Euston station. Statistics on the

racial composition of the population come as a surprise after the headlines of the last year, which implied a virtual takeover of the area by Bengalis. According to the 1991 census, of a population of 7,100, 17.7% are Asian, 6.1% black, and 74.2% white (2% 'other'). An independent report in 1988 found extensive racism in local authority housing policies. Somers Town has had a long and ignoble history of racist violence, including the murder of an Asian restaurant worker in 1987, and the violent attack on Asian youth in Drummond Street in 1992 by a white gang armed with hammers, which led to the Asians being prosecuted and a vigorous self-defence campaign.

Unlike the smart town houses and green streets of the rest of Camden, Somers Town has high levels of deprivation. It has the lowest proportion of owner-occupier households in Camden. 73% of households do not have use of a car. 'The socio-economic problems of the white working-class community will have to be addressed hand-in-hand with any anti-racist initiatives', says Dharmendra Kanani of Camden Race Equality Council.

Targeting Asian youth

Everitt's murder set off a huge police investigation, in which over 300 local Bengali youth were questioned – in stark contrast to the police investigation over the Stephen Lawrence murder, as solicitor Imran Khan points out. It is Asians who are treated as aggressors and put under surveillance, even when they are the



WHAT IS 'JOINT ENTERPRISE'?

Badrul Miah was convicted of murder, even though it was never suggested that he had killed Richard Everitt. The basis of the charge was the doctrine of 'joint enterprise', or 'common purpose'. This doctrine allows people to be prosecuted for their involvement in a crime in the absence of any evidence that they actually joined in, if they were 'all in it together'. The danger is that people who were simply present at the scene of a crime find themselves in prison for it.

This happened in northern Ireland in the Casement Park trials, in which five people were convicted of the murder of two soldiers who drove into a funeral procession in Belfast in 1988, although none of them actually shot the soldiers. In 1993, Amnesty International expressed concern about this application of the common purpose doctrine.

Before the doctrine was used to convict people caught up in violent events in northern Ireland, it had been developed

in apartheid South Africa. In 1987, the Sharpeville Six were found guilty of murder for attending a protest in which a councillor was killed; the court held that their presence at a demonstration which turned violent made them guilty of the man's murder.

Strangely, the doctrine of joint enterprise has never been used to convict members of racist gangs involved in attacks which have resulted in the deaths of black people. ■

victims of attack. According to community workers, Asians reporting racist attacks to the police were questioned about Everitt's murder. Others were stopped in the street and taken to police stations on various pretexts eg, drugs offences, but once in the station were questioned only about the murder. In this way, the police sought to establish the whereabouts of every Asian youth at the time of Everitt's murder, so eliminating them as potential alibi witnesses. It is impossible to conceive of such a police operation if the victim had been black and it was white youths who were under suspicion.

Obsession with 'gang violence'

Media attention has focused on the issue of 'gang violence' between Bengalis and whites. 'The impression you get from the media is of groups of roaming Asians going out looking for whites to attack,' Sarver Lalljee of the Drummond Street Asian Youth Association told CARF. For DSAYA the word 'gang' is in itself an unhelpful and loaded description (after all, the Famous Five were a 'gang'!) The day after the murder it was reported that a 'gang of eleven Asians' had been questioned at Euston station – they were released when they were found to be a football team! 'Given the level of harassment and attacks from local whites that Bengalis in Camden have been exposed to, it is not surprising that many of them will simply not go out alone,'

says Sarver Lalljee. The only way for a Bengali to stay alive in Camden is to be part of a so-called 'gang'.

Dharmendra Kanani claims that 'The hype around "gang violence" has subverted a debate which should be about racism, into one of law and order.' Local authority anti-racist initiatives then take the form of more police officers on the streets, closed circuit TV and increased surveillance, which, he admits, 'is a doubled-edged sword'. At a ceremony marking the anniversary of Richard's death, groups of Bengali youths were picked off the street and 'given a talking to' in the police van. And now, when whites roam into Drummond Street, police escort Asians out of the area rather than those who have come to cause trouble.

What next?

There is very little locally based development work being carried out, though the REC is focusing on the government's White Paper on housing as an issue of common interest that might encourage black and white people to work together. A recent police initiative, nicknamed 'the hamburger summit', in which police took a group of Asians and a group of whites to a Kings Cross burger bar where, over a milkshake, they eventually agreed not to stare at each other in the street, was hailed as a small success by the police but indicated blind desperation rather than a considered strategic approach.

The statistics on racist violence in Camden have never been higher – 271 racial incidents between January and June of 1995; twice the number for the corresponding period for 1994. Schools and youth clubs remain segregated. 'The result of all this sensationalism has been that the day to day racism – racist assaults and abuse, police brutality – has got passed over and ignored,' observes Dharmendra Kanani. He points to the attack on Bengali teenager Shoab Miah in May which, like so many other racist assaults, failed to attract the attention that Everitt's murder has. Shoab is still recovering after being beaten repeatedly around the head with a snooker cue. He developed a blood clot on his brain and remained unconscious for several weeks. For Bengali teenagers like Shoab, Badrul and Showkat there is no justice – just us. ■



Badrul Miah

The friends and family of Badrul Miah and Showkat Akhbar have launched a campaign to quash the convictions. For more details ring 0171 388 3259.

BRADFORD VICTORY

Four Asian youths, charged with public order offences and assaulting police officers in events which triggered two nights of uprisings against the police, had charges against them thrown out of court in October. The arrests arose from an incident in June in which police officers ran over the foot of an Asian playing football in the street outside 20-year-old Javed Iqbal's home in Manningham, Bradford. Iqbal alleges that he was racially abused and beaten inside his home before being arrested and that his sister, who was feeding her baby, was also hit by an officer. Local people say that it was police heavy-handedness and unjust arrests that led to the disturbances, which saw angry protests outside the local police station. Dismissing the charges, the magistrate said that the case raised 'serious doubts' about the reliability of police evidence and that, under scrutiny, the prosecution's case had collapsed 'like a pack of cards'. A Police Complaints Authority investigation is underway. ■

A LOCAL BLACK HISTORY

Eighteen years ago, thousands of copies of this magazine, then in tabloid form, got trampled underfoot as mounted police charged through anti-fascist demonstrators trying to prevent the National Front marching through Deptford and Lewisham. That event and many more struggles – around the New Cross fire in which 18 young people died, against police brutality, for community education, to create black parties – are chronicled in a new history of black Lewisham entitled *The Longest Journey*.

Joan Anim-Addo has painstakingly researched the area, taking down oral history from key activists and long-time settlers. But this is far more than just a history of post-war Lewisham. She begins her researches with the Roman conquest of England, uncovers the involvement of Lewisham in slavery (and abolition) and brings alive on the page the doings of black individuals from the sixteenth century onwards that she has gleaned from parish registers, public records, local papers, diaries and books.

Lewisham defends itself against fascism in 1977



This 218-page book is beautifully illustrated and, hopefully, it will be read (and studied in formal educational settings) well beyond Lewisham's boundaries. It is a fascinating read and an exemplar of how local black history can be recorded. ■

Longest Journey: a history of black Lewisham by Joan Anim-Addo, Deptford Forum Publishing, 441 New Cross Road, London SE14 6TA, £7.99 (plus £1.50 p&p).

GHETTO QUESTIONS

Race, class and

CARF assesses the importance for anti-racists of a recent conference which looked at the black experience on both sides of the Atlantic.

As over one million African-American men marched in Washington, the London-based journal *Race & Class* called on the services of its black editorial board members in the US and UK to hold a unique conference on 'Race, class and black struggle'.

'For too long we have allowed the middle classes in our communities and the town hall bureaucrats to redefine the black agenda and the solutions to racism. We need to go back to basics – discuss how we can rebuild black unity, what international solidarity means and how free-market economics have affected the black working class globally', said A. Sivanandan, launching the conference. Over 350 people, predominantly black, from Liverpool, Manchester, Birmingham and Leicester, came to the University of London Union on the evening of 16 October to join in this task.

The real agenda

It was inevitable that the audience would want to focus on Farrakhan; this was one of the first public occasions for a black panel of speakers and a black audience to assess him from a black perspective. But from that perspective, neither Farrakhan's personality nor the Nation of Islam is crucial to understanding US racism. A more fruitful starting point is how to

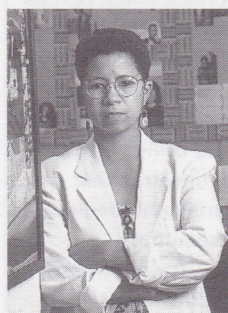
express solidarity with poor black people facing a sustained racist onslaught from economic monetarism, New Right welfare cuts and the erosion of civil rights gains.

Solidarity

Sivanandan put the need for black solidarity in the context of a 'New World Order, the Capitalist Order, the new imperialism where the world is divided



CARF INTERVIEW



What is your attitude to the Million Man March?

I am worried by the way it has shifted the terrain of struggle – on the issue of sexism and women's role and by its conservative message. A day of atonement? It is Bill Clinton and

Newt Gingrich, not Black men or women who need to atone. We cannot afford to replicate victim-blaming ideas at a time when our communities are under serious attack.

The attack on Black and Latino poor people in the United States is unprecedented. Welfare is going to be eliminated in the state of Illinois by 1999. Shelters are being cut back, the number of beds reduced, qualifications to get social service programmes are being

CARF spoke to Barbara Ransby, leading Black feminist and co-founder of African American women in Defense of Ourselves, about recent events in the US.

increased while the money for other services is being decreased. That devastating attack really demands of us an aggressive militant response. So Farrakhan's march coming in the midst of that attack is all the more frightening and dangerous. We have to respond by saying it is not the behaviour of poor Black people which is the problem, it is the system. Moreover, no progressive Black movement can afford to celebrate patriarchy and exclude Black women activists.

But the march is very significant and we are fooling ourselves if we dismiss it. We have to respond to it – at least by offering an alternative perspective. For me, in part, it brings home the need for a reinvigoration of a radical Black left intellectual and activist community that connects itself to struggles and us to each other. We are disappointed to see certain of our 'comrades' go out on a limb on this march and we want to say 'that's the

wrong way to go'. But we haven't created that community of struggle where we can critique and hold one another accountable. The trouble is that many of us in the academy have been trained in a very individualistic way of defining our politics that has hurt our ability to do the kind of collective ideological work that is required in order to respond effectively. And, secondly, we need to identify ways to translate that ideological work into a language which is accessible to people who are not academics.

Can we turn to the OJ Simpson trial? How did Black women feel about the verdict?

The jury was predominantly Black women, of course. And the majority of Black women, as far as I could tell, thought the decision was a good one. One explanation is that people felt that it was an indictment of the Los Angeles Police Department, which is notoriously racist toward Black men and women. People could very easily see the PD setting up someone in

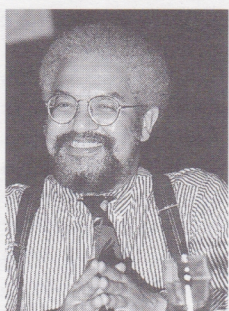
black struggle

into the haves and the have-nots and the never-will-haves; the rich, the poor and the superfluous – euphemistically known in the west as the underclass: a replica of the Third World in the First.'

Barbara Ransby, campus organiser and director of African-American research at De Paul University, saw the situation of US blacks as particularly bleak, and one in which black activists could not afford to be purist. 'We have to debate the best way forward for our community. I support all parts of the struggle. I support initiatives which are not ideal in terms of my own politics. A lot of those marching behind Farrakhan's banner also have criticisms, but there is a real hunger and a leadership vacuum.'

In the UK black nationalism is often viewed by the Left as just as bad as white racism, but this overlooks the fact that black nationalism has not developed separately from white racism but is a reaction to it.

Manning Marable, director of the Institute of Research in African-American studies at Columbia University, told the



Darren Jacobsen

conference of the 'warehousing' of black unemployed men in jails, so that today, about half of the 750,000 people in US jails are African Americans and almost a third of black men between the ages of 24 and 29 are in jail, on probation, on parole or awaiting trial. President Clinton's Omnibus Crime Bill earmarks \$10 billion for the construction of new federal prisons, increases the number of federal crimes to which the death penalty applies from two to 58, and proposes mandatory life sentences for anyone convicted of three violent felonies.

Leadership vacuum

The Left critique of black nationalism also fails to take into account the elimination of a whole generation of progressive African-American leaders

the way that OJ's defence team suggested they did, because many of our own experiences are of racism with the cops, cops' flagrant disregard for any rights and the contempt that is the norm for working class and lower-middle class whites (which is the background of most of the cops) towards 'successful Blacks'.

But people did not factor in class. Had there been just a fraction of the evidence against a brother off the street without OJ Simpson's money, he would be under the jail right now. Whether OJ was guilty or not, he purchased the defence. Whether he purchased justice or exemption from justice, I'm not sure. But clearly his class privilege was a buffer that tempered the racist treatment he would have otherwise received.

White women's responses complicated things. I think a lot of that was racist. I heard a number of white women from national organisations saying, 'this is not a race issue'. But it was a race issue and Blacks on the jury were, and should have been, seeing the case through their experiences of racism.

White women could not have conceived of cops doing this.

What of the recent attacks in the US on affirmative action?

It was a reform that was offered as a strategy to defuse or misdirect the more fundamental demands that people were making for change. Its primary impact was to lift the aspirations of various petit-bourgeois constituents. But I think there have been positive effects too.

If you look at firefighters or other public service jobs they have been opened to people of colour, as a result of affirmative action laws. Whenever there is a reform like this there is going to be a contradictory effect. The response to the attack on affirmative action has to be a lot bigger than just pointing out how inadequate the programmes have been. We might critique programmes on one level but still defend on another the concept that this society does in effect owe something to people who have been systematically oppressed, marginalised and exploited by that society. ■

THE MESSAGE: HIP HOP AND BLACK NATIONALISM

Many of the most renowned rap lyrics are also some of America's most potent political messages: from Public Enemy's 'Don't Believe the Hype' to NWA's 'Fuck the Police' to KRS-1's 'Sound of the Police'. Public Enemy were the first rappers to support the Nation of Islam, but hip hop's attraction to black nationalism covers its whole history. Even hip hop stars like Ice Cube and Ice T came out in support of the Nation, following the Los Angeles rebellion in 1992. For these so-called rap activists, lecture tours and community projects became complementary to their music. A track like the Brand Nubians' 'Meaning of the 5%', which is a Farrakhan speech laid on top of a hip hop beat, had the potential for extending the Nation of Islam message to an audience far beyond their actual membership.

But whatever hip hop's value as a mode of political expression it has also been subject to forms of conservatism, arguably enforced by the logic of the market and the need for mainstream appeal. Hip hop artists have endorsed the Nation of Islam's message on gender, that *behind every great black man is a strong black woman*. Hip hop's constant attacks on women also, in turn, repeat mainstream stereotypes about the black family. As well as sexism, some rappers have been prone to anti-Semitism, influenced by Nation of Islam literature.

Hip hop's mass popular appeal is able to encompass widely differing and contradictory positions. The majority of artists eschew politics altogether; many others embrace the Nation of Islam and other motifs of black power; while recently-deceased Eazy E declared support for the Republican party.

Whatever the contradictions, hip hop's political potential can best be illustrated by tracks like Public Enemy's 'Burn, Hollywood Burn', in which Chuck D denounces the racist US film industry and, in what is almost a premonition of what happened in Los Angeles in 1992, fantasises about rioters torching Hollywood. ■



GHETTO QUESTIONS

by the US state, beginning with the assassinations of Malcolm X and Martin Luther King. 'The American government has aggressively attempted to isolate or imprison black leaders on the left', said Manning Marable. 'The Black Panther Party was specifically targeted and wrecked by the FBI and the local police. Since then, hundreds of progressive black elected officials have been indicted and imprisoned.' Jan Carew, a former associate of Malcolm X, who edited one of the first British black newspapers, urged the

audience to go beyond the Farrakhan issue to concern themselves with solidarity campaigns like that to stop the death sentence against Mumia Abdul Jamal.

Beyond personalities

While black struggle in the US is reduced to the personality of Louis Farrakhan, real criticisms of the conduct of 'race politics' are obscured. 'We used to say we wanted a black face in a high place,' said Manning Marable. 'Someone who looks like you, has the same ethnic identity as you, does not necessarily advocate your interests.' Sivanandan had also drawn attention to the way that progressive struggles had been degraded into identity politics. He was, he said, 'fed up with nationalism, culturalism, ethnicism, cultural politics, identity politics, the quest for personal freedom, personal pleasure,

to the exclusion of everything and everybody else. What on earth does black mean if not kinship, community and solidarity?'

Marable noted the support Farrakhan attracted from the black middle class: 'What Farrakhan is attempting is to construct a political bloc between conservative, separatist black nationalism and a substantial fraction of black elected officials and the petit bourgeois leadership who take a conservative line on economic development and social issues.' Cedric Robinson, author of *Black Marxism*, reinforced his critique: 'What we have is not merely street theatre with its obscene gestures toward atonement and misogyny, but a concealed embrace with the state.'

The *Race & Class* conference may not have had all the answers, but it brought a new perspective, one which can inform and galvanise, and not simply close down debate. ■

Equality programmes are under attack in the US; the idea that America is a racist society is being seriously questioned by academics

Ironically, the ideological justification for all the attacks comes from the writings of a 34-year-old Indian – Dinesh D'Souza. Four years ago, he hit the headlines with a book called *Illiberal Education: the politics of race and sex on campus* in which he railed against the coercive tactics of the 'politically correct'. According to him, affirmative action was discrimination, academic standards were being subverted (by the multicultural curriculum) and a new tyranny was being practised by those who purported to fight intolerance. The Right loved him. After all, here was someone with a brown face saying exactly what they wanted to hear. *Newsweek*, *Time*, *New Republic*, *Atlantic Monthly* all gave him massive coverage. Even George Bush took up his cry as he addressed Michigan university. Little wonder D'Souza sold over 100,000 copies of that book.

D'Souza: darling of the Right

D'Souza's caring tone and apparent democratic preoccupations are misleading; he has always been on the Right. At college he was a founder of the *Dartmouth Review* (funded by the right-wing Madison Center for Educational Affairs) and later worked as a domestic policy analyst for the Reagan administration. D'Souza, Allan Bloom and Roger Kimball, all key players in asserting the PC menace, were all funded by the right-wing John M Olin Foundation. Now, as

Racism and the Right

Research Fellow at the American Enterprise Institute, D'Souza has come out with his wildest claim yet – that we are witnessing the end of racism. In his book *The end of racism: principles for a multiracial society*, he moves from attacking anti-racist remedies to attacking racism's victims directly.

'Dysfunctional black pathology'

Black (and he means African-American) failure is not caused by racism, says D'Souza, but by a dysfunctional black pathology. He describes certain discriminatory acts, eg, cab drivers refusing to pick up young black men, as 'rational discrimination'. He defends the cabbie on the grounds that he knows by picking up a black fare he is more likely to be mugged. 'A bigot', says D'Souza, 'is simply a sociologist without credentials.'

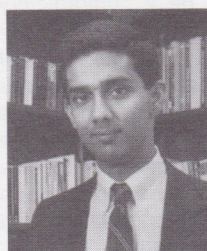
Under cover of being up-front, honest and destroying racial shibboleths, D'Souza makes the most horrific claims about the 'civilizational deficiencies' of black people, though segregation ensured that they, 'like the handicapped, would

be permitted to perform to the capacity of their arrested development' and slavery has proved to be 'the transmission belt that nevertheless brought Africans into the orbit of modern civilisation and Western freedom'. It is hard to know if he seriously believes his own propaganda or is merely trying to 'shock and sell'. But central to his thesis are the ideas that the civil rights movement was quite misguided and that it is black culture which is holding back African-Americans who need to learn 'to act white... and end their parasitic dependence on government provision'.

The political context

The reality of black America shows that a young black man has a greater likelihood of being arrested than obtaining a job that adequately supports him and his family; the reality of black America means that 11,348 black babies die before their first birthday (two and a half times the rate for whites) because of prenatal and postnatal conditions; the reality of black America reveals that black households have ten times less wealth than white households.

What is more shocking is that the book has been published just when states are considering to end all welfare provision for families with dependent children, when both Republicans and Democrats have largely repudiated the legacy of civil rights reforms and no issue is more likely to set the tone of politics before the 1996 elections than affirmative action. ■



D'Souza: a bigot with credentials

France: war without negotiation

In a three month period from 25 July to 20 October over two million identity checks were carried out across France, all part of 'Vigipirate', a national anti-terrorist operation described by the interior minister as 'war without negotiation'. The Algerian Armed Islamic Group (GIA) has claimed responsibility for a wave of bombings which, since June, have left ten people dead and hundreds injured. Yet all North African youth are being targeted by army and police patrols across France as suspected terrorists.

Meanwhile, in October, rubber bullets were issued to the police to deal with unrest on housing estates with a large 'immigrant' population following uprisings across the country. The state sees these 'riots' as evidence of the growth of Islam. North African youth blame oppressive policing and constant identity checks. What is going on?

Fundamentalism or racism?

Violent clashes in the French *banlieues* are hardly new, but press interest is. Any confrontation is viewed by the media as an expression of Islamic fundamentalism, but a cursory look at some of the major clashes since June points to an entirely different scenario.

Several hours of fighting between Jewish, North African and Chinese youth on the one hand, and the police on the other broke out in the working class Paris neighbourhood of Belleville in June after police harassed a Jewish youth during an identity check. Can this really be an expression of Islamic fundamentalism? Can youths on an 'immigrant' estate in Yvelines be blamed for demonstrating their anger after a police officer and his friend armed themselves with two pump-action shotguns and went berserk on their estate? Sporadic violence on another estate in Yvelines, from May-June, was triggered, say North African youth, by constant identity checks and oppressive policing.

The GIA's bombing campaign started in June, but the state's ability to track down the bombers has been pitiful. Instead, thousands of North African youth have been arrested, only to be released without charge after the four days allowed under anti-terrorist laws. Indiscriminate raids are also used as an excuse to go on fishing raids for 'illegal immigrants'. Chirac has set a target of 24,000 deportations a year.

Nowhere to turn

This is not to say that some North African youth aren't attracted to the fundamentalist cause. But what is beyond doubt is that French racism and arrogance are contributing to the feeling that there is nowhere else for them to turn. Internationally, they see the nuclear tests in

Unfortunately for the government, a TV crew was on hand to film Kelkal's execution. The film shows Kelkal shouting to the police to 'stop shooting' after he was severely wounded by gunfire, and an order to 'finish him off' as he lay on his back, with no possibility of firing since his pistol lay in his limp hand.



Meir Tarian

President Chirac is so concerned about urban unrest that he organised a special viewing for all his ministers of the cult movie *La Haine* (Hate).

the South Pacific and Chirac's refusal to back down from talks with the Algerian president as bombs go off all around him. Nationally, police and state racism are pushing them to the limits. Now, in the killing of Khaled Kelkal, the police have created just the kind of martyr that young North Africans will identify with.

France's 'Death on the Rock'

Khaled Kelkal, from Vaulx en Velin, a suburb of Lyon, was demonised by ministers and media as France's most wanted man, the mastermind of the bombing campaign. He was subsequently shot dead in a gun battle that has been compared to the killing by British security officials in 1988 of three unarmed IRA volunteers in Gibraltar. A vast amount of resources were deployed to track Kelkal down, including helicopters, radar equipment, dog teams, a parachute regiment and 800 police officers, but eventually two farm workers spotted Kelkal in woods outside Lyon and police moved in.

The film was edited when it was shown on TV. But publicity about its uncensored version has sparked off a furious debate in which civil libertarians point out that Kelkal's execution makes it impossible to ascertain whether Kelkal was an angry ghetto youth or the 'front man' for a ring of Islamic fundamentalists, exporting Algeria's war to France.

The head of the independent broadcasting corporation has said, 'You have to remember that it was not just our compatriots who were watching that night, but also the young people on the housing estates.' In other words, if you are the child of a North African immigrant, with French citizenship, you can never be considered French, but are forever a potential foreign terrorist.

The final word should go to the French equivalent of the Police Federation, which has warned the government that 'Vigipirate' could make the *banlieues* 'unpoliceable' once the terrorist threat is over.

Is there anyone listening? ■



CAMPAIGNS AND REPORTS

Satpal Ram: no justice, no peace

On 24 November the Court of Appeal dealt a bitter blow to Satpal Ram and the campaign to free him by dismissing the appeal against his 1987 conviction for the murder of Clarke Pearce in a Birmingham restaurant.

The appeal hearing had started on 20 October and continued on the following Friday. The judges heard evidence from a forensic pathologist that the wounds Satpal inflicted were consistent with a struggle in self-defence after a racist attack. They accepted that Pearce had started the fight by hurling racist abuse

when Asian music was played in the restaurant, and had attacked Satpal with a broken glass, giving him a face wound which needed three stitches. But they rejected the suggestion that Satpal's original barrister, Douglas Draycott QC, mishandled the trial by failing to put forward the defence of self-defence. They roundly dismissed the suggestion that Satpal's barrister further ruined his chances of a fair trial by advising him not to give evidence, and by allowing two important eye-witnesses to give evidence without interpreters, so that their evidence



A peaceful picket outside the High Court by Satpal Ram's supporters was violently attacked by police who made two arrests

lost most of its impact through failure to be understood by the white jury.

Members of Satpal's legal team believe that the judges were more concerned to protect the leading barrister who conducted the trial than to secure justice for Satpal. In the process, the message they have sent to the black community is that self-defence against racist attack is punishable with life imprisonment. That is a message which all anti-racists must join Satpal Ram in rejecting. ■

The campaign to Free Satpal continues. Ring 0121 507 1618 for details.

• FASCIST ROUND-UP • FASCIST ROUND-UP • FASCIST ROUND-UP • FASCIST ROUND-UP •

BNP candidates flop again

The BNP continues to hone its political machinery in preparation for the next general election, where it intends to stand 50 candidates. Armed with the headline news that the BNP is set to become the third largest party (*British Nationalist* September 1995), its candidates continue to lurch, like drunken Don Quixotes, from one ignominious defeat to another.

In October's county council election at Ashfield, Nottingham, former miner and Derwent Housing Association member Gary Marshall played the law and order card for the BNP at Kirkby East. With his history of violence against women this was, predictably, a non-starter. He managed to poll 104 votes – eight more than in May.



Gordon Callow

Gordon Callow stood for the BNP in the Limehouse (east London) by-election in November. Callow's national socialist pedigree includes membership of Mosley's Union Movement and Colin Jordan's National Socialist Movement in the 1950s and 60s, and polls of 10-12% in previous by-elections in Millwall and Shadwell. Perhaps he would show us a hint of the imminent electoral breakthrough which BNP führer John Tyndall likes to wax lyrical about? It was not to be. Following a desultory low-key campaign, reflecting the divisions over BNP strategy, Callow managed a paltry 147 votes (6.5% of the turnout). Not so much French Front Nationale, more Monster Raving Loony Party. Having achieved its fifteen minutes of fame with Beackon's by-election victory in 1993, for the BNP history is only likely to repeat itself as farce.

No more brothers' wars?

In a hilarious five-page article in September's *Spearhead*, führer Tyndall waded into the fray against Combat 18, accusing its leadership of working for the state and against the nationalist cause. Ridiculing C18's claim to represent the vanguard in a racial war, he pointed out that since its formation its most serious attacks have been against fellow fascists rather than opponents.

Much of Tyndall's spleen derives from a series of C18 attacks on BNP members such as Eddy Butler and Tony Lecomber

in late 1993 and early 1994, to which the BNP was unable to respond. Its weakness exposed, it immediately instigated a truce. C18 continued to poach BNP members by pointing out the absurd fantasy of Tyndall's reformist electoral strategy. But C18 has proved equally incapable of launching its promised 'race war'. On the few events that C18 has managed to organise in London, its racial warriors were chased off the streets and, in several instances, into the safety of a waiting police car. It has made the occasional foray against 'soft' targets – but who is going to take a fat lump of lard like Charlie Sargent seriously, anyway?

The latest feuding between the organisations seems to have been triggered by Tyndall's suspicion that C18 was behind the theft of computers – and membership lists? – from the Bromley home of hapless BNP office manager Alf Waite. In a follow-up article, in October's *Spearhead*, he boasted that 'Leeds BNP took on C18 in a fight and gave them a thorough thrashing', adding, 'No-one takes any notice of their threats up in Yorkshire any more.'

Given Tyndall's renowned 'lack of bottle' in the face of resolute opposition, one can only wonder what he's up to, and hope that the war between the racial comrades continues as it has begun.

BNP shows true colours

BNP member John Shippen, of Westmore-



Euro-election watch

JUST BEEN

France The FN is still gloating over the results of June's municipal elections, which gave it control of Toulon, Orange and the Marseilles suburb of Marignane, marking the first time in 50 years that the extreme right has achieved any mayoral posts in France's 36,000 town halls. But a re-run in Toulon looks possible after the official scrutineer unearthed irregularities.

Norway The anti-immigrant Progress Party almost doubled its share of the vote to 12 per cent in September's city and council elections. Biggest gains were in Oslo. Anti-racists say that the Progress Party, which blames immigrants for AIDS and organised crime, has pushed the mainstream's immigration policies even further to the right.

Latvia In October's parliamentary elections,

the extreme-right People's Movement for Latvia, led by German Joachim Siegerist (who can't even speak Latvian), won 15 per cent of the vote, making it the second largest parliamentary party with 16 seats. Siegerist, who campaigned to free Rudolf Hess, has appealed against a one-year prison term in Germany for incitement to racial hatred.

COMING SOON

Austria An election date of 17 December has been set after the coalition government of Social Democrats and Conservatives collapsed. The Freedom Party (FPÖ), led by Jörg Haider, is predicted to be the beneficiary, with opinion polls suggesting that it could even come second with 27 per cent of the vote.

LOOK OUT FOR

Russia Will Boris Yeltsin last till June, the scheduled date for the presidential election? Meanwhile, a new right-wing candidate for the presidency has come forward. Lieutenant General Alexander Lebed, who is absorbing support previously given to the fascist Zhirinovskiy, recently expressed admiration for former Chilean dictator Augusto Pinochet.

Italy Caretaker prime minister Lamberto Dini has said he will resign after the budget goes through and by 31 December at the latest so that a general election can take place next year. Forza Italia's fortunes are unpredictable as Berlusconi is soon to stand trial on corruption charges. The AN and the Northern League have already turned immigration into the main election issue, with the Northern League forcing the government to bring in an anti-immigrant decree as the price of its support for the budget. The AN wants the immediate expulsion of all immigrants from Italy. A Northern League senator wants air force planes to be used for mass repatriations. ■

FASCIST ROUND-UP

land Court, Hebburn, Tyneside, has been jailed for six months for attempting to sexually assault a black woman. When Shippen appeared at Newcastle Crown Court in October, the jury was told that he subjected the young woman to a torrent of foul mouthed racist abuse before trying to kiss her and grab her breast. In his defence Shippen whined that he has been harassed since the incident. Another shining example of the 'racial supremacy' of the master-race!

National Democrats storm Remembrance Sunday

The National Democrats, formerly the Anderson wing of the National Front, held their first Remembrance Sunday march on Sunday 12 November. After the embarrassing turnout last year when the National Front only managed to pull out 30 members for the annual parade, the ND hoped to show members that a new name equals a new way forward. In the event they managed a national mobilisation of nine people. Obviously a great future awaits the organisation.

The ND will also be standing a candidate, Kevin Sills, in the Bowden ward, Market Harborough, near Leicester on the 7 December. The organisation has been leafleting in the Kidworth area and faces a legal challenge from the Liberal Democrats over its name. ■

Death by 'noise rage'?

At the Old Bailey in September, Peter Thurston was sentenced to life imprisonment for arson, GBH and the murder of Donna O'Dwyer. The trial judge, Michael Coombe, recommended he serve a minimum of 22 years. Donna O'Dwyer was a 26-year-old black woman who attended a party on the 13th floor of a tower block in Leyton, east London in July 1994, along with about 40 other people. In the early hours of the morning, Thurston, in combat fatigues and probably armed with an imitation Czech Scorpion machine gun, firebombed the party, cutting the main power supply in the process. The flames spread along the main corridor in seconds, blocking the only exit. In the ensuing panic, as party-goers attempted to escape the smoke and flames in the darkness, Donna O'Dwyer tried to get out of the kitchen window to reach the balcony of the adjoining flat, and fell 13 storeys to her death.

Thurston's conviction at first sight does justice to black people. But many who followed the case and campaigned around it are left very uncomfortable by the way his crime was presented. The Leyton Race Attacks Support Group, which was formed by survivors of the attack with the assistance of community groups from surrounding boroughs, maintained from the outset that the attack was racially motivated. But the police and the CPS had other ideas, in spite of a host of evidence. Thurston's original trial in April 1995, was abandoned because the jury was accidentally shown a description of the contents of his flat, which included numerous imitation and decommissioned firearms, and hundreds of books and articles on weapons, bomb-making and fascism. The prosecution and the defence had agreed that this

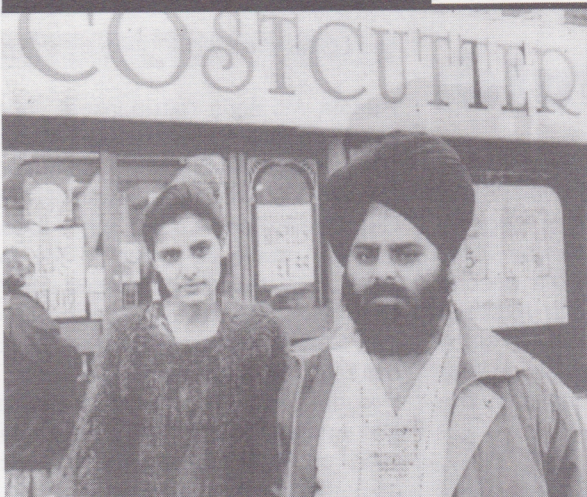
evidence of Thurston's racism was 'irrelevant' to the trial and should not be seen by the jury. The jury in the retrial never saw it. Neither jury was told of Thurston's fascist past, including his lapsed National Front membership; nor were they told that, according to a work colleague, he referred to black people as 'niggers' and became obsessive and frenzied when he talked about them.

The prosecution claimed it was Thurston's 'disproportionate hatred of noise' that caused him to firebomb the party rather than any racist inclinations. He did not have a problem with black people, only with black music, and 'noise rage' not racism was the motivation. This shift meant that a large part of the blame for the firebombing could be laid at the door of those attending the party. The judge hoped that the local authority would investigate the operation of 'these parties', while the defence spoke of the 'heavy moral responsibility' on those who ran the party. This reversal was also manifest in the treatment of the estate's Housing Action Trust: it rehoused the Thurston family but gave a lower priority to the person whose flat he had gutted, offering him a flat in the same block.

Many people on the estate feared Thurston, who had a violent reputation. But, far from exposing 'noise rage' as a spurious excuse for a homicidal attack, the CPS played a disgraceful role in keeping compelling information about the racial motivation of the murder from the public domain, allowing the trial to reinforce popular racism about black people holding noisy parties. ■



Donna O'Dwyer



Mohan Singh Kullar's family outside the shop where he was murdered

Racist murderers jailed

Three racist thugs were found guilty at Swansea Crown Court in October of the murder of Mohan Singh Kullar, who died in November 1994 defending his house and shop in Cimla, Neath in south Wales from a racist gang attack.

The gang, returning from a Saturday night drinking session in nearby Llanelli, surrounded Mr Kullar's Costcutter store at 3am and lobbed bricks through the window. Mr Kullar went outside to investigate, and was attacked by gang members, who smashed his skull with a brick. He died in Morriston Hospital nine days later without regaining consciousness.

22-year-old Grant Watkins boasted to friends that he had 'dropped a Paki'. He was sentenced to life imprisonment for murder. Stephen May was jailed for eight years for manslaughter, and Ian Thomas for three and a half years for violent disorder. All of the men came from Cimla. Two other men were acquitted.

In a separate incident, Craig Hughes was detained at her majesty's pleasure after being convicted at Cardiff Crown Court of killing a man who confronted him after he shouted racist comments in an Indian take-away in Porth, mid Glamorgan. Ian Gibbs told Hughes to shut up and leave the take-away after Hughes started screaming racist abuse. Hughes pulled a knife and stabbed Gibbs to death. He also stabbed Ian's friend, Darren Palmer, eight times.

The convictions coincided with the release of

Home Office statistics revealing that racially motivated incidents in south Wales have increased by 66% in the past five years, taking the area to fourth place in the number of racist incidents in Britain – behind Greater Manchester, West Midlands and Northumberland. Independent sources believe that Home Office figures of 401 incidents in south Wales during 1994 are a gross underestimate. Labour MP Peter Hain observed that 'independent crime surveys confirm the problem is about ten times larger. All the evidence suggests that there were over 8,000 racially motivated incidents in south Wales in 1993 alone.'

Combat 18's decision to hold its September 'convention' in Caerphilly shows that the fascist right is keen to exploit the situation. Following the meeting, it attacked a local pub, injuring a 60-year old local man and a young boy. Two of the fascists were arrested. ■

Around the courts

Courting arrest

The ministerial crackdown on asylum-seekers is reflected in Home Office representatives' questioning in asylum appeals. In a recent appeal involving a Libyan who claimed persecution on the ground that he was a member of a banned political party, the questioning went as follows:

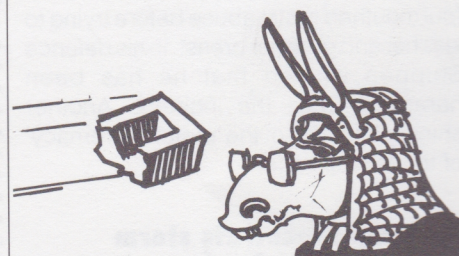
'You knew this party was banned when you joined it, didn't you?

'So why did you join it?

'You were deliberately bringing yourself to the attention of the authorities by joining it, weren't you?'

Who's who?

Meanwhile, Home Office treatment of Nigeria has yet to catch up with reality. The latest ploy is to suspect all Liberians of being Nigerians (and therefore, of course, returnable to Nigeria). In order to 'catch out' Nigerians who claim Liberian nationality, a secret questionnaire has been devised, containing questions such as 'What is the most popular beer in Liberia?' Heaven help teetotal Liberian asylum-seekers. ■



Why do 'model prisoners' die?

The death of 'model prisoner' Shkander Singh in a police cell in 1994 (see CARF 29) was investigated by Sheriff Eric Galt in October. Mr Singh, from Govan, died from heart failure after he had been heard shouting, banging and crying in his cell. The Sheriff heard how, finding Mr Singh slumped half-naked on the cell floor with his turban stuffed down the toilet, police had decided that he was faking illness. He demanded that Strathclyde police force tighten up their procedures, and that guards should call for medical assistance in every case of apparent illness.

The Singh family are not satisfied with the investigation, and ask why the bruising to Shkander's body, the tear to his shirt

and the turban in the toilet were all ignored. A spokesman said: 'This turnkey looks in and sees this "model prisoner" lying on his back and decides he's feigning this illness. Come on, are we expected to accept that this is OK?'

On 18 October Dennis Stevens, 29, was found dead in a 'special cell' of Dartmoor prison, wearing a restraining body belt of the type which was banned after the death of Joy Gardner. Stevens, like Singh, is described as a model prisoner. He was due for release within months after serving seven years for robbery. But according to the prison, this trusted prisoner, who had already been granted home leave, had to be restrained

in a body belt because he was assaulting staff. Other prisoners have suggested that he had been subjected to a series of nightly beatings before he met his death. Sharon Palmer, Stevens' partner for eleven years, said, 'Something in Dartmoor has gone terribly wrong.'

Inquest is also collecting information on two other recent black deaths in custody. Brian Augustine was found hanging in his Pentonville prison cell on 30 October; Raja Khan, aged 24, who had been sentenced to six years for robbery, was found hanging in Mount prison on 5 October. ■

INQUEST, 330 Seven Sisters Road, London N4.
Tel: 0181-802 7430

Anti-racist football drama

'Kicking Out', a 70-minute play produced by the ARC Theatre Ensemble and aimed at 13-year-olds and above, is testimony that some of the most impressive and thoughtful anti-racist work is being carried out using the vehicle of drama. 'Kicking Out' has already toured over 300 schools nationally and is set to be performed in 200 more. And on the strength of the showing CARF attended at a multi-cultural school in Islington, it could run and run.

This is the story of five young people from different backgrounds: white, Asian, African-Caribbean, boys and girls, who form a five-a-side football team coached by the older Eddie Phillips. Showab, who is Asian, is by far the most talented young player around, but he refuses to join the team, despite the pleas of his white working-class friend 'Beaner', because of his deep hostility to the coach.

The other kids start out by accepting coach Eddie Phillips' interpretation of why Showab won't join the team: football is 'not part of Asian culture' and Asian families



'don't like it'. But gradually the kids' illusions about Eddie are stripped away. The man who boasts that he once played for West Ham until injury wrecked his career is revealed as a liar and a racist who once organised an all-white under-12s team and indoctrinated them about the 'master race'. Only towards the end of the play does Showab confide to Beaner that, as a boy,

he saw his uncle murdered by a racist gang. It doesn't matter if the murderer was Eddie or another racist thug; racist words easily turn into violent acts, and the persistent anti-black comments of Eddie Phillips are not as harmless as Beaner would like to believe. The kids now have the strength to take Eddie on and expose him as the pathetic, weak liar that he is. Now it is Eddie, not Showab who is excluded from the team.

It was the football and community liaison officer at Leyton Orient FC who first approached ARC and asked them to stage a play for young people about football. A writer from the company spent several months talking to fans, players, coaches and kids, and what emerges from this thoughtful process is a realistic account, not only of the passion that football generates, but also of the problems young people from different backgrounds encounter in forging relationships in a racist and sexist society. ■

More information from the ARC Theatre Ensemble, Eastbury Manor House, Eastbury Square, Barking, Essex IG11 5SN. Tel: 0181-594 1095.

Devon's victory



On 16 October, Devon Malcolm, the Derbyshire and England fast bowler born in Kingston, Jamaica, was awarded substantial libel damages, the apologies of a pillar of the British cricket establishment and the compliments of a High Court judge - all just hours before his departure for South Africa as a member of the England touring team. *Chris Searle writes:*

For once, Devon's brave challenge was off the field of play. The slur on Malcolm and other black test cricketers like his Dominica-born team-mate Philip de Freitas by Robert Henderson in *Wisden Cricket Monthly* (see CARF 27), was not just a personally offensive argument about patriotism or national loyalty - although, as Malcolm's lawyer Naynesh Desai pointed out, it had caused great offence to the fast bowler, one of cricket's great triers and achievers against the odds. There was far more at stake. By couching the article in biological terms, using the heading 'Is it in the blood?'

and making clear that biology lay 'at the heart of the matter', Henderson was invoking the same discredited blood-based genetic arguments that are being revived by racial 'scientists'. Thus Devon's victory not only knocked out the middle stump of racism in cricket: he also bowled a straight bouncer at the distortions of Herrnstein, Murray, Jensen and all the scientific bigots who periodically rise up and seek to make science from racism.

There is no more revered and sacred name in cricket than 'Wisden'. The *Wisden Cricketers' Almanac* has been known for decades as the 'Bible' of cricket, and the journal which published the libellous article, by carrying the same name and having a gallery of renowned cricketers and cricket journalists on its editorial board (including England captain Mike Atherton) is seen as a quasi-official mouthpiece of the ruling interests of the sport. Thus Devon's blow is a very significant one, exposing the centrality of racism to the heart of cricket's controlling powers.

Malcolm is dividing his damages award between the Derbyshire Children's Hospital and the Devon Malcolm Cricket Centre, established to develop young urban cricketers in north-east Sheffield, where he lived as a teenager on his arrival in England. Attached to Earl Marshall Comprehensive School, the centre has been thriving for five years, developing the talents of mainly black young cricketers and encouraging them to break through the barriers of racism that

still, after many years, continue to obstruct their progress in Yorkshire's cricketing structures.

In this way Malcolm, whose bowling feat of 9-57 'made history' of South African's residually white cricket team in August 1994, is illustrating the dictum of CLR James, who, in his *Beyond a Boundary*, declared that the true cricketer will always see his or her responsibility as returning to the community from whence he came and which was the seed-bed of his talent. ■

When hate comes to town

What makes a successful community campaign against racism? How far can the law be stretched in dealing with fascists? How can unions respond to racism? All these questions are answered in a new Searchlight community handbook, *When hate comes to town: community responses to racism and fascism*.

With sections explaining how Britain's various nazi and far-right parties operate, guidelines on anti-fascist security, the role of various statutory bodies and profiles of successful community groups, the Searchlight Educational Trust has amassed a huge amount of information in an accessible and practical form. The handbook will be a valuable 'starter pack' for those who want to campaign against racism and fascism in their community, school or workplace. ■

Price: £30 for organisations, £20 for community groups, £15 for individuals from Searchlight, 37b New Cavendish Street, London W1M 8JR.

Home Secretary Michael Howard vetoes joint European action against racism.